



**More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program  
Progress Report to the North Carolina General Assembly**

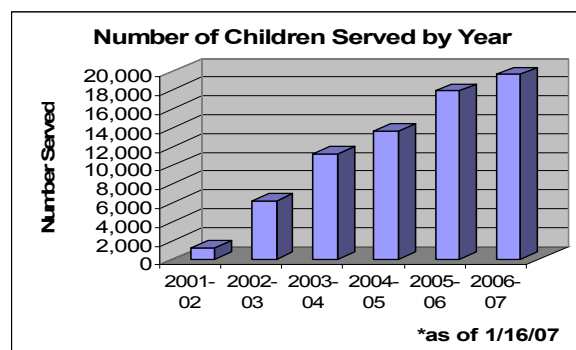
Submitted by the  
Office of School Readiness,  
NC Department of Public Instruction

February 1, 2007

## **Pre-kindergarten for North Carolina's at-risk four-year-olds**

More at Four is North Carolina's state-funded pre-kindergarten program to prepare at-risk four-year-olds for success in school. Pre-kindergarten is a research-proven strategy for school readiness. Without this opportunity, the young children served by More at Four would enter kindergarten lagging behind their peers.

More at Four has served 19,638 children in SFY 2006-07, as of January 16, 2007. The program is available in all 100 counties. Children served have factors that put them at risk of school failure, with family income as the primary risk factor, and will be entering kindergarten the following year.



More at Four's goal is to first reach those at-risk four-year-olds who are unserved. Among the children served in SFY 2006-07, as of Jan. 16, 72 percent were unserved when enrolled and 59.2 percent had never been served in any preschool or child care setting.

### **Children's language, literacy, math and social skills are improving substantially**

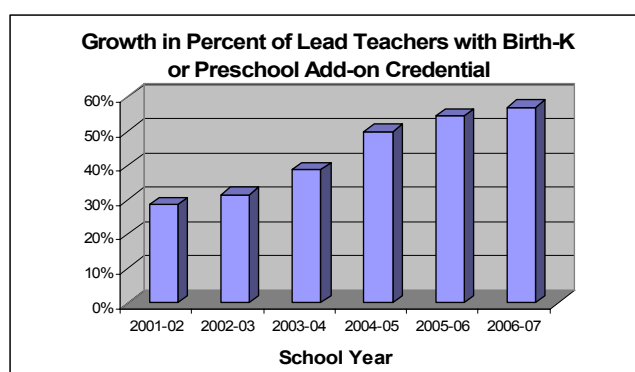
According to the 2005-06 More at Four evaluation by FPG Child Development Institute, children exhibited substantial developmental growth over the program year across multiple skill areas - language/literacy, math, general cognitive knowledge, and social skills. The evaluation reports that its "findings are consistent with a number of other large-scale studies that have found that pre-k participation was associated with sustained gains in language/literacy, math and social skills as well as greater gains for children at greater risk." (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf, 2006)

### **A commitment to high quality**

More at Four is recognized as one of the six highest-quality state pre-kindergarten programs nationally by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), by meeting nine of

ten pre-k quality benchmarks (and should meet the tenth benchmark in future NIEER reports.) More at Four's high-quality program standards include licensed teachers with specialized training and ongoing professional development, small class size, staff-to-child ratio, research-based and comprehensive curricula and a focus on the whole child and family.

Over 57 percent of More at Four lead teachers now hold a Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) license, Preschool Add-on license or provisional B-K license (public schools only), as standards require, up from 28.6 percent in 2002-03. Furthermore, 83.4 percent hold at least a bachelor's degree. Teachers not meeting the standard are required to work toward licensure and are supported as they further their education. More at Four provides funding to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project to provide scholarships for teachers and teacher assistants, as well as to support health insurance costs for some teachers.



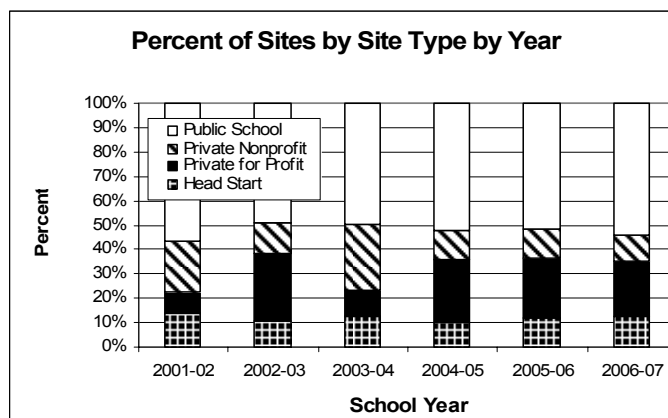
The Office of School Readiness continues to provide extensive, ongoing professional development and technical assistance for local More at Four programs to promote ongoing quality improvement. Professional development workshops available throughout the 2006-07 year cover the following topics: curricula, developmental screening, inquiry-based science, outdoor learning, and *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*. Also this year, over 1,100 More at Four teachers and administrators attended the NCAeys/OSR-More at Four 2006 Annual Study Conference. In addition to numerous workshops, this conference provided a pre-conference session for More at Four teachers that focused in-depth on authentic child assessment.

## Collaboration for school readiness

More at Four fosters coordination and collaboration within North Carolina's early care and education system. Communities develop collaborative plans for implementing More at Four classrooms locally, with shared leadership from Smart Start and the public schools and broad representation from early childhood service providers. At the state and local levels, More at Four works closely with Smart Start, the public schools, Head Start, licensed child care providers, the Division of Child Development, services for children with disabilities ages birth

to five, and other relevant programs to create a more coordinated system of early care and education services.

Local communities implement More at Four pre-kindergarten classrooms in a variety of sites, including public schools, licensed for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, and Head Start programs, according to locally determined needs and resources.



## The NC Office of School Readiness

The North Carolina Office of School Readiness (OSR) was created in 2005 by merging the state staff of the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program and staff from the Department of Public Instruction for Preschool Exceptional Children programs, Title I Preschool and the Even Start Family Literacy Program. The Head Start State Collaboration Office was also transferred from the Division of Child Development to the OSR.

The OSR provides funding, policy development and planning, standards, professional development and technical assistance to support the provision of high-quality pre-kindergarten and preschool programs locally and to better coordinate and integrate all state and federally-funded preschool programs. The OSR supports preschool programs in both public schools and licensed child care centers.

The OSR was placed administratively in the Department of Public Instruction effective July 1, 2006. This move reflects the understanding that early childhood programs must have integral relationships with and transitions to public schools. It advances our vision for North Carolina around school readiness - where all children are ready for success in school and all schools are ready for all children.

## More at Four financial information

Over 92 percent of state appropriations for More at Four support classroom operations. The average state operating cost per slot is \$4,050 per year, about half the cost of high-quality pre-k. At the local level, communities contribute other resources to support the full cost of serving children in a high-quality program (these resources are typically underreported, especially in-kind resources.) State funds also help enhance teacher quality, through scholarships and professional development.

**Table I. More at Four Budget for SFY 2006-07, as of January 16, 2007<sup>1</sup>**

Budget Category	Budgeted Amount	% of Total
Classroom Start-Up (one-time allocation)	3,294,729	3.9 %
Classroom Operations	75,300,935	89.0 %
<b>Subtotal - Classroom Funds</b>	<b>78,595,664</b>	<b>92.9%</b>
T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarships	1,412,000	1.7%
Professional Development	848,149	1.0%
External Evaluation and Database	967,547	1.1%
Administrative Costs	2,812,349	3.3%
Transferred to Subsidy <sup>2</sup>	--	--
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>84,635,709</b>	<b>100 %</b>

**Table II. Estimated Other Resources Supporting More at Four at the Local Level Projected for SFY 2006-07, as reported as of January 16, 2007<sup>3</sup>**

Type of Funds	Projected Amount	% of Total
Smart Start <sup>4</sup>	14,582,460	33.1 %
Pre-School Disabilities	2,730,033	6.2 %
Subsidy	2,298,854	5.2 %
Head Start	6,606,148	14.9 %
Title I	7,439,423	16.9 %
City/County Appropriations	7,432,376	16.9 %
Other	3,014,878	6.8 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 44,104,172</b>	<b>100 %</b>

<sup>1</sup> Actual expenditures are unknown until the end of the state fiscal year.

<sup>2</sup> Legislation requires that any funds for slots unfilled by Jan. 31 shall be transferred to child care subsidy.

<sup>3</sup> Actual expenditures of other resources accessed at the local level are unknown until the end of the state fiscal year. These resources are typically underreported, especially in-kind resources.

<sup>4</sup> Other resources accessed from Smart Start in SFY 2006-07 represent the budgeted amounts as reported by More at Four contractors. Smart Start budgeted contributions may also be reported under subsidy.

## A smart investment for progress in education

With over five years of investment in a state-funded pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds, the program is proving successful. Yet, challenges remain for the program's future. State funding provides about half of the full cost of a high-quality pre-kindergarten program. Local communities are facing increasing funding challenges as the program expands and as local resources available to support the full costs of the program are dwindling or needed for other purposes. As more teachers achieve the Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) licensure, it is increasingly critical to adequately fund teacher salaries and benefits to keep these teachers in More at Four classrooms, especially in private child care and Head Start settings. Communities are also challenged by the need for more classroom space for pre-k and transportation. A survey of 91 county/regional More at Four contractors in Dec. 2006-Jan. 2007 indicated that over half have waiting lists for preschool services. Survey results also indicate that the most significant barriers to serving more children include: lack of physical space (80 percent, especially in public schools); insufficient reimbursement (54 percent; 64 percent in private settings); and inadequate transportation (42 percent; 68 percent in private settings).

Despite these challenges, More at Four has grown over five years to serve more children every year and is effectively reaching its target at-risk population. By providing a nationally recognized high-quality program, More at Four is enabling these at-risk children to achieve significant growth over the school year in language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge and behavioral skills — skills that prepare them to do well in kindergarten. These children would enter kindergarten at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers without this opportunity.

More at Four's commitment to high-quality pre-kindergarten also benefits children beyond those who are funded by More at Four. With 1,427 classrooms across the state, the reach is wide. The programs that participate in More at Four, whether public schools, licensed child care or Head Start, commit to high standards and ongoing quality improvement, and sixty percent of those classrooms also serve children funded by other sources or parent fees.

Furthermore, progress continues in the effort to expand high-quality pre-kindergarten opportunities through the creation and implementation of common *North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten Program Standards* across settings and auspices. These standards are modeled on the More at Four standards and support the implementation of *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*. The Office of School Readiness and the Division of Child Development are partnering to implement a process to provide special state recognition to classrooms serving four-year-olds that meet the state standards, regardless of funding sources supporting those classrooms. Planning efforts are underway and the recognition process will be piloted this year. The recognition will be available to programs for four-year-olds in all early childhood education settings - including public schools, Head Start and child care. The recognition will help spotlight high-quality pre-k throughout the state and provide important information for families and communities.

## 2005-06 More at Four Evaluation Highlights

Evaluation of the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program is carried out for several reasons. One is to determine the extent to which children served by More at Four are learning during their preschool year. Another is to document whether More at Four is meeting its goals in terms of the quality and characteristics of the services provided and the population served. The evaluation also considers how programs can be improved to improve outcomes for children to an even greater extent. Thus, the evaluation includes outcome measures for children, as well as several measures of the classroom environment and teacher-child interactions. It also attempts to look at relationships among variables as a way to determine what might make the most difference in outcomes for children and quality environments.

### Target Group

While the More at Four program has grown quickly, it is still reaching the appropriate target group. In the evaluation sample, 79 percent of children were unserved at the time of enrollment and 60 percent of the children were never previously served.

### Outcome Measures

The evaluation findings for the More at Four Pre-K Program for 2005-06 show that children continue to make significant gains in all skill areas over the course of the year and are consistent with findings from previous years.

- Skill areas include language and literacy (receptive language, rhyming, story and print concepts, naming letters), math measures (applied problems, counting task), general knowledge measures (color knowledge, social awareness), and the social skills measure.
- One measure that showed no significant change was children's problem behaviors, which were slightly *below* the population mean (i.e., *fewer* problem behaviors), which is consistent with findings of previous years.
- The most at-risk students continue to make the most gains. However, the gap in skills, while narrowing, is not closing. Further analyses will examine if the most at-risk children are also in lower quality classrooms.

Some other outcome findings are noted:

- Higher quality in the classroom is associated with *lower* gains on "letter naming" and *higher* gains on "rhyming" and "social skills."
- Children with lower language skills (e.g., limited English proficiency) do less well with "rhyming." Rhyming is a high-level language skill that is related to reading. Children with lower language skills may not be able to acquire rhyming skills until they further develop their language skills, so that the focus should be on developing their language skills to the point where they are ready to learn higher skills like rhyming. Further analyses will also look at the quality of classrooms for children with lower language skills.
- Spanish-speaking children generally make gains in outcomes in *both* languages, except for "receptive language" (vocabulary) in Spanish. Further, if they gain more in the Spanish language, they are also gaining more in English. It is not an either/or choice. In fact, children who have higher skill levels in Spanish make more gains on English language measures.

## Quality of the Environment

As in previous years, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) was administered to a sample of More at Four classrooms. Two new measures were added in 2005-06 to further explore quality environments: the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) and the Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS), which measures the sensitivity of teachers' interactions with children.

- The average ECERS-R scores have dropped somewhat in the 2005-06 evaluation sample from a similar evaluation cohort group from 2003-04 (4.4 down from 5.3). This is not the direction we want to see. However, More at Four also provides ECERS-R assessments for all classrooms in their second year of operation as a More at Four classroom (independent of the evaluation sample). These average ECERS-R scores continued to increase (5.8). The difference in these two sets of results is not readily explained, except that they are comprised of different samples. However, the evaluation results may suggest that classrooms obtain higher scores in Year 2 of operation (when we assess them for quality) and tend to drop in the third and fourth year. This suggests OSR and local contractors need to continue efforts to help classrooms and teachers maintain the environmental quality.
- On the ELLCO, scores were relatively higher on the Classroom Observation Scale (measures the quality of language/literacy practices) and the Literacy Environment Checklist (measures availability of books and writing materials in the room) than on the Literacy Activities Rating Scale (measures frequency of book reading and writing activities). The implications of these findings suggest that teachers may be slightly better at *setting up the environment* than *implementing* literacy-related activities. While the percentages were still positive, this result suggests areas for continued training and professional development.

## Other Resources Accessed by Contractor

More at Four Program, FY 2006-07 (as of 1/11/07)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Alamance-Burlington School System	174	184	X	X	X	X		X	
Alexander County Partnership for Children	40	42	X		X	X		X	X
Alleghany County Schools	59	59		X	X	X			X
Anson County Partnership for Children	131	108		X	X				
Ashe County School System	139	147	X	X		X	X	X	
Avery County Public Schools	84	85		X		X			X
Beaufort/Hyde Partnership for Children	135	143					X		X
Bertie County Schools	53	54		X	X		X		
Bladen County Schools	237	242		X			X		X
Brunswick County Partnership for Children	150	160	X	X	X	X			X
Buncombe County Partnership for Children	214	233	X	X	X	X			
Burke County Partnership for Children	413	436	X		X	X	X		X
Cabarrus County Partnership for Children	289	300			X		X		X
Caldwell County Smart Start	72	78			X		X	X	X
Northeastern Community Development Corp. (Camden)	36	37			X				X
Carteret County Schools	135	140		X				X	
Caswell County Schools	63	67		X		X	X		X
Catawba County Partnership for Children	195	200		X	X	X	X		X
Chatham County Partnership for Children	60	62		X	X				X
Edenton-Chowan Board of Education	32	32					X		
Cleveland County Partnership for Children	400	427			X			X	
Columbus County Schools	253	250							X
Craven County Board of Education	120	126		X	X		X	X	X
Cumberland County Partnership for Children	976	1024			X			X	
Currituck County Schools	18	18					X		
Dare County Schools	36	36		X			X		
Davidson County Partnership for Children	297	308		X		X	X		X
Davie County Schools	147	142		X					X
Duplin County Schools	128	130		X	X		X	X	
Durham Partnership for Children	330	349		X	X			X	
Smart Start of Forsyth County	475	504		X	X	X		X	
Franklin/Granville/Vance Partnership	18	19			X				X
Gaston County Schools	522	545	X		X				
Gates County Board of Education	36	40	X			X			X
Granville County Schools	75	77			X		X		
Guilford County Partnership for Children, Inc.	1075	7754		X	X			X	
Halifax Warren SmartStart Partnership for Children	140	131		X	X				X

More at Four Program, FY 2006-07 (as of 1/11/07)									
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Harnett County Partnership for Children	178	227			X				
Henderson County Partnership for Children	122	130			X			X	
Hertford County Public Schools	99	101		X		X		X	X
Hoke County Schools	113	123		X	X		X		
Hyde County Schools	23	14				X	X		X
Iredell County Partnership for Young Children	231	259	X		X				
Partnership for Children of Johnston County	295	316			X				X
Jones County Partnership for Children	70	70		X	X	X			
Lee County Partnership for Children	168	188		X	X	X	X		
Lenoir-Greene Partnership for Children	234	235			X				
Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Co.	207	195					X		
Community Action Opportunities (Madison County)	18	20						X	X
Martin County Schools	58	58		X		X			
McDowell County Schools	94	103	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	1489	1656			X				X
Intermountain Children (Mitchell County)	35	42							X
Montgomery County Partnership for Children	176	180			X				
Moore County Schools	37	38			X				
Down East Partnership for Children (Nash/Edgecombe)	267	281	X	X	X	X	X		X
New Hanover County Schools	612	619		X	X	X	X	X	X
Northampton County Schools	81	84		X	X	X		X	
Onslow County Schools	52	53		X		X		X	X
Orange County Partnership for Young Children	144	149	X		X			X	
Pamlico County Schools	34	34				X	X		X
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	78	83		X					
Pender County Schools	100	104							
Perquimans County Schools	36	36		X		X	X		X
Person County Partnership for Children	88	98		X	X	X		X	
Pitt County Public Schools	228	238		X					
Polk County Schools	86	87		X				X	
Randolph County Partnership for Children	214	228			X		X		
Region A Partnership for Children (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain Counties)	403	412	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Richmond County Schools	241	247	X		X	X			
Public Schools of Robeson County	481	521	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rockingham County Partnership for Children, Inc.	184	197			X		X		X
Rowan Partnership for Children	146	162			X		X		X
Rutherford County Schools	262	291						X	X

More at Four Program, FY 2006-07 (as of 1/11/07)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Sampson County Partnership for Children	162	181			X		X		
Scotland County Schools	180	188		X			X		X
Stanly County School System	211	217		X		X	X		
Stokes Partnership for Children, Inc.	180	199		X	X	X	X	X	X
Surry County Early Childhood Partnership, Inc.	221	204	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transylvania County Schools	48	49		X	X		X		
Tyrrell County Schools	18	19			X	X	X		
Union County Public Schools	240	252	X		X		X		X
Vance County Schools	38	42		X	X	X	X		X
Wake County SmartStart	764	831			X				
Washington County Schools	69	70		X		X	X		X
Watauga County Schools	82	79	X	X	X	X	X		X
The Partnership for Children of Wayne County, Inc.	504	540	X		X		X	X	X
Wilkes County Schools	442	468		X	X	X		X	X
Wilson County Partnership for Children	126	136			X				
Yadkin County Schools	105	112			X		X	X	X
Region D Child Care, Inc. (Yancey County)	52	57	X						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,583</b>	<b>19,612</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>47</b>